

SUPPORTING LGBTQIA+ EMPLOYEES



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Introduction

With Pride Month just having passed, many businesses may be reflecting on their day to day practices and consider ways in which they can take steps to be more inclusive – you may have already noticed many companies adding rainbow colours to their logos as a display of solidarity to the LGBTQIA+ community.

As a business operating today it's important to understand the challenges some of your staff members may be facing in the workplace, as discrimination and bullying are unfortunately still a significant issue. Simply changing your logo is not going to be enough if you haven't considered the steps being taken to support your own staff members and encourage inclusion within the wider community.

What does LGBTQIA+ stand for?

LGBTQIA+ is an inclusive umbrella term which seeks to include all genders and sexualities. It stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual and Allies. It also aims to represent all other sexualities, sexes, and genders that aren't included in the named letters by including the "+" symbol.

What steps can I take as an employer?

Positioning yourself as a positive LGBTQIA+ employer is a worthwhile endeavour. Not only will your staff members feel safe and secure in the workplace, allowing them to contribute fully, but you will also be exposed to reduced risk of discrimination claims. Additionally, if individuals are able to be their authentic self instead of expending energy trying to cover up, this will likely have a positive impact on absence levels which relate to stress and mental health.

To support employees who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community, you may wish to consider the following:

- **Review, Share and Live your Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.** The starting point and foundation should be ensuring strong and inclusive policies are in place. We suggest reviewing all policies and procedures from the perspective of ensuring they don't leave anyone left out. When you are happy with what you have, it's not enough to tidy these away in a cupboard or online folder, make sure everyone is aware and understands how concerns can be raised and what is expected to avoid any unwanted conduct towards LGBTQIA+ staff members.
- **Staff Networks.** It is the individuals working for you who create and sustain any sort of culture. Developing relationships and connections with people is a great way to engage with staff and allows the freedom to connect with fellow staff members. You can help facilitate this by creating safe spaces where groups of people, such as those belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community, can reach out and support one another.
- **Encourage Staff to Share Their Pronouns.** Small and tangible changes can help keep your inclusive approach at the forefront of everything you do, and by encouraging people to share how they wish to be referred to, you can take a small step towards individuals feeling they are a genuine part of the team.

GET IN TOUCH

If you have any questions, or would like further support, please get in touch with Georgia Wilson by calling 0141 221 2984 or by email at georgia.wilson@aab.uk.

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- **Provide Opportunities for Training.** We can all learn more and being open minded is key to the idea of developing an inclusive culture, a known factor in supporting LGBTQIA+ staff members. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training can be very beneficial and is more than a tick box exercise when taken seriously and as an employer you have a prime position to provide opportunities to develop and challenge peoples' thinking.
- **Explore the support of your networks, suppliers, competitors and local charities.** Talking about and raising awareness of such issues in the workplace is vital. Bringing the topic of LGBTQIA+ staff members and some of the challenges they face to the table can be very powerful, as it demonstrates the company's mission to make the workplace more inclusive. Learning from the experiences of other Clubs may spark new ideas and identify ways in which you can support inclusion within your Club and wider community.

Underpinning all these suggestions, is the idea that employers must be committed to inclusivity. It should be a fully realised and genuine practice, as it's important you don't take a hollow or half-hearted approach. However, by taking steps such as those outlined above, you can help to ensure LGBTQIA+ staff members are supported and included in at all times, allowing them to contribute fully to the success of your organisation.

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